

# ENTERPRISE RETAIL *grocery* REPORT



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October 2018



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ENTERPRISE  
RETAIL *grocery* REPORT



# KEY FINDINGS

- Ninety percent of customers shop and purchase groceries in a physical store.
- Twenty-seven percent want a well-coordinated online and in-store shopping experience.
- Twenty-seven percent of Bridge Millennials have recently changed their grocery store.
- Eighty-three percent of consumers buy grocery products every week.
- Twenty percent of all consumer retail spending is on grocery or food at home products.
- Cost, convenience, and choice of product are the three most important factors when choosing a grocery retailer.
- Only five percent of consumers shop and purchase groceries online, but 27 percent want a well-coordinated online and in-store experience.
- For nearly 17 percent of consumers, having the ability to scan and pay with a mobile phone is the most important factor when choosing a grocery retailer.
- Twenty-four percent of consumers who shop online prefer to have their orders shipped to them instead of picking them in-store.
- Bridge Millennials are most likely to use an online device or voice assistant during their grocery visits, with 8 percent of this generation shopping via a computer.
- While younger millennials are a little more likely to switch retailers, 27 percent of Bridge Millennials have recently changed where they shop for groceries.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In an \$800 billion market, grocery brands like Albertson's, Kroger and Walmart are constantly fighting to be consumers' first choice.

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But when it's time to stock up on groceries, consumers aren't willing to reevaluate their priorities. They want fresh products, at a low price, from somewhere not too far from their homes. For retailers, that means mastering the three Cs: cost, convenience and choice. Retailers need to flawlessly hit all three components to capture customer loyalty and stay relevant in an increasingly competitive industry.

For grocery stores, capturing customers' loyalty can be tricky at the best of times. To keep them happy and coming back, brands must claim the best locations, shelve the best products and offer the best prices both in stores and online.

It's more important than ever to look at the ways customers are interacting with grocery retailers, and how they can leverage this relationship to stay on top in an increasingly competitive industry. We surveyed more than 2,500 customers to better understand what they are buying, where they're shopping and why they might prefer one grocery store over another.

The average U.S. household is spending \$56,697 per year, nearly \$20,000 of that corresponding to food or similar retail products. Grocery shopping is a ritual for most Americans, too, with 83 percent of them doing so – and often buying the same products – every week. Food-at-home

accounts for a growing share of consumer spend, representing 20 percent of retail for all age brackets except 25 to 34.

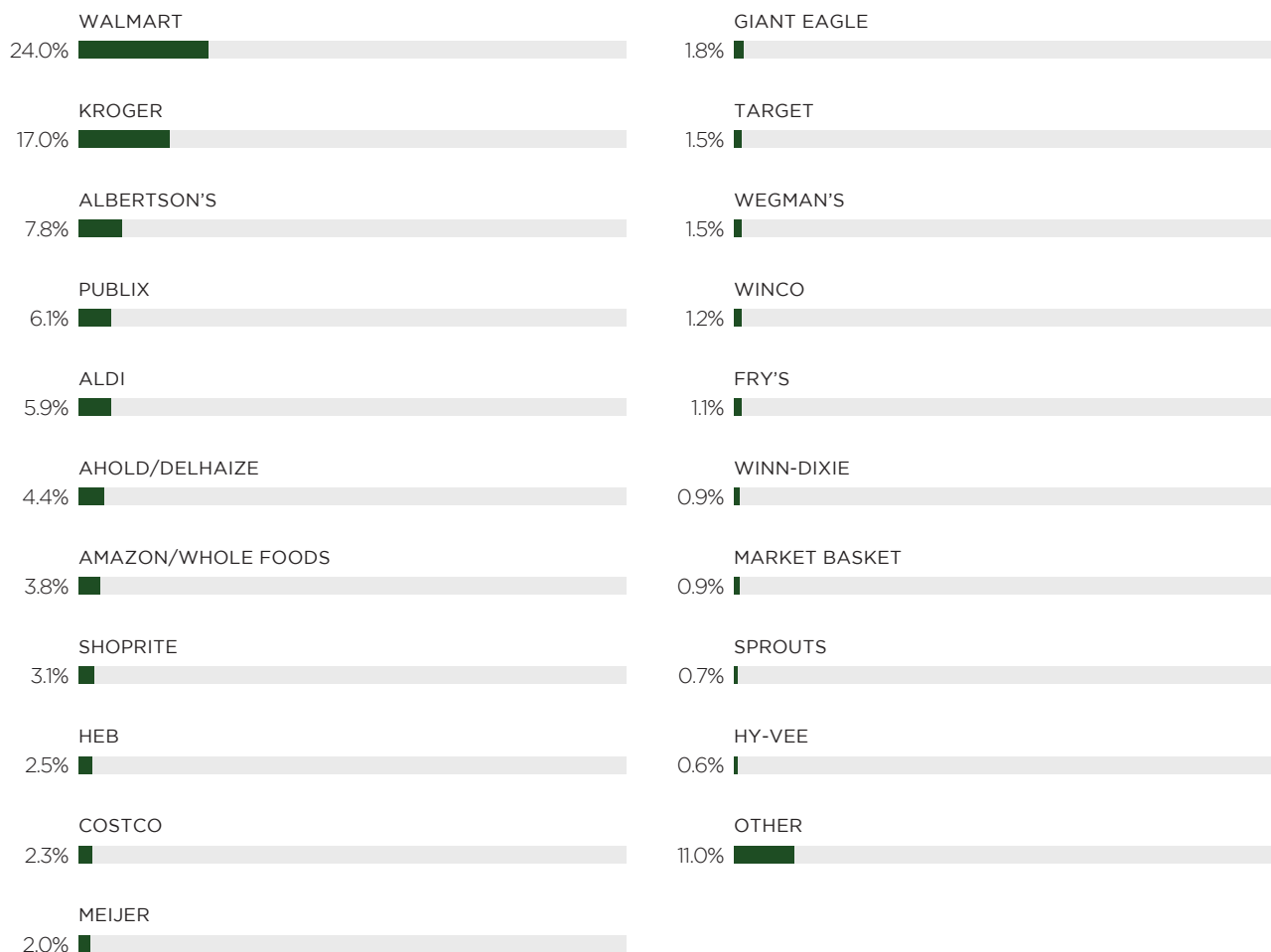
On one hand, this provides retailers with a significant opportunity to capture recurring customers. On the other, most customers are creatures of habit, and getting them to shop with a different merchant for the same products can be challenging.

When it comes to where customers do their grocery shopping, merchants shouldn't underestimate that customer habit. The "grocery wars" might be raging on a new, digital front against online retailers like Amazon, but more than 90 percent of consumers still like to shop and purchase in a physical store. This is good news for established players like Walmart, with widespread infrastructure and easy accessibility across the country. In fact, it is the preferred grocer for 24 percent of the consumers in our sample.

That said, like other grocery brands and retailers, Walmart is also fighting the "Amazon effect." The eCommerce giant might not be the top grocery merchant, but it is preferred by approximately 4 percent of customers. Its march into the space is already influencing the way Walmart and other incumbent brands are approaching business.

**FIGURE 1:****Top merchants for grocery purchases**

Consumers' favorite merchants for grocery purchases, by retailer



Walmart is still the most dominant player in the market so far, and it was preferred by 24 percent of consumers in our sample. By some estimates,, it accounts for 23 percent of U.S. grocery spend.<sup>1</sup> The retailer sold \$220 billion in 2017 (approximately 20 percent of total grocery spend), compared to Kroger, with sales of \$122.7 billion that year, according to PYMNTS research.

Meanwhile, Amazon-owned Whole Foods, which is preferred by nearly 4 percent of consumers, accounts for approximately 2 percent of grocery spend.

<sup>1</sup> Corkery, Michael. Walmart, Amazon offers digital grocery pickup at Whole Foods. The New York Times. 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/08/business/amazon-whole-foods-walmart-groceries.html>. Accessed October 2018.



With its delivery expertise and eCommerce empire, Amazon will have to match the convenience and physical permeability of Walmart if it wants to remain competitive in the space. The company is working to achieve that by expanding its Amazon Fresh and Prime Now delivery offerings, and potentially using its 483 Whole Foods stores as “mini distribution centers” to better serve customers.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Walmart is focusing on offering customers a more seamless omnichannel shopping experience at its nearly 5,000 U.S. locations, including features like buy online pick up in-store (BOPIS), and an expanded delivery service.<sup>3</sup>

Whether through Amazon, Walmart or Kroger, consumers want to be able to shop when and how they like. Though the physical store is still most customers’ top choice, that doesn’t mean

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Consumers want  
to be able to shop  
**when and how  
they like.**

”



merchants can slack off on digital offerings. In fact, 27 percent of consumers rated a well-coordinated online and in-store experience as the most important factor in their shopping experience.

All of this means customer loyalty is more important than ever, for physical retailers as well as those offering online services. Other than cost, choice and convenience, income, education level and age all play into where customers go for their weekly grocery trips. Retailers will need to consider such factors if they want to tap into a notoriously fickle customer base.

The following sections will examine exactly how retailers can go about doing this.

<sup>2</sup> Kowitz, Beth. How Amazon is using Whole Foods in a bid for total domination. Fortune. 2018. <http://fortune.com/longform/amazon-groceries-fortune-500/>. Accessed October 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Levy, Adam. Walmart's feeling the pressure to stay ahead of Amazon. The Motley Fool. 2018. <https://www.fool.com/investing/2018/09/09/walmarts-feeling-the-pressure-to-stay-ahead-of-ama.aspx>. Accessed October 2018.



## WHERE CUSTOMERS ARE SHOPPING AND WHY

**F**or the most part, consumers are shopping and purchasing grocery products in physical stores. Here, “shopping” refers to the list of goods or products for which a customer might be searching, while “purchasing” refers to actually buying the products.

Ninety-two percent of customers shop for groceries in a physical store, and 91.5 percent purchase there. Meanwhile, nearly 5 percent both shop and pay for groceries online. The portion shopping with a mobile device or voice assistant is rather miniscule.

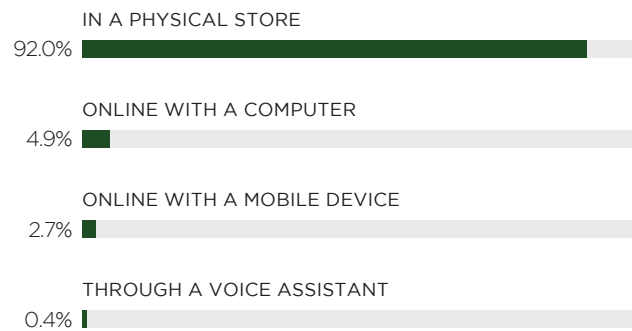
By a razor-thin margin, the small number of consumers who did go online for part of their grocery procuring process were more willing to shop for goods than purchase them. Importantly, though unsurprisingly, these customers also tended to be younger.

On average, consumers older than 30 make approximately 45 grocery trips per year while those aged 18 to 24 make about 38. Consumers between 18 and 24 also tend to have less money, an important distinction

**FIGURE 2:**

### How consumers shop for groceries

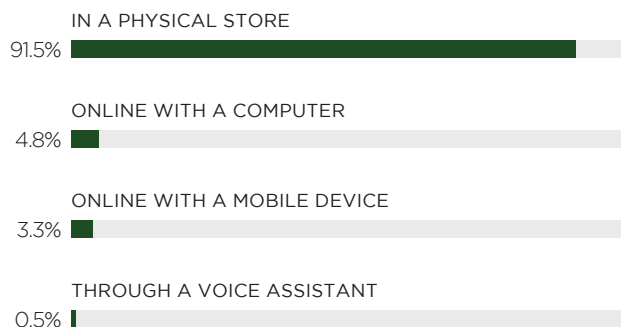
How consumers shop for in-store groceries, by device



**FIGURE 3:**

### How consumers purchase groceries

How consumers pay for in-store groceries, by device





when considering customers with lower incomes are also less likely to make frequent grocery visits.

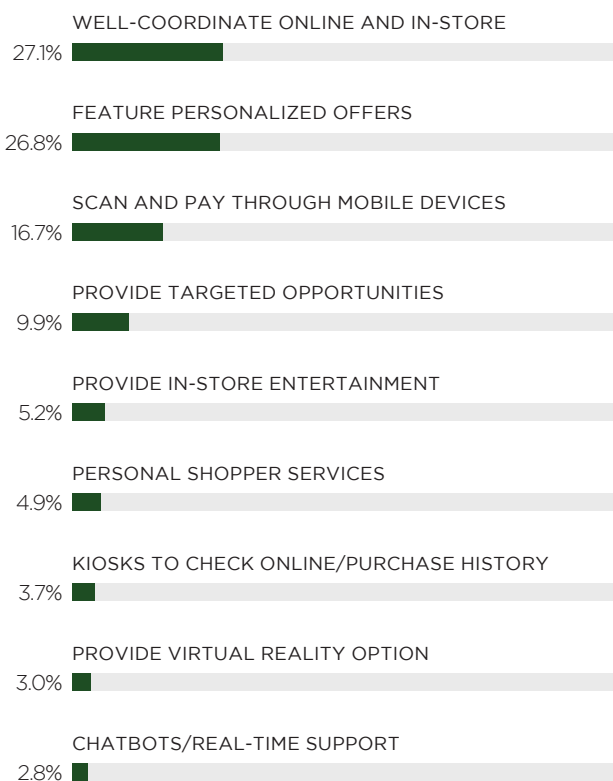
Whether young or old, the ability to have a well-coordinated online and in-store experience was the top influencer for consumers choosing where they should shop and purchase, narrowly beating out personalized offers. Having the ability to scan and pay with phones was the third-most important factor, cited by 16.7 percent of consumers in our sample.

For merchants, capturing customers' loyalty means hunkering down and offering omnichannel features like BOPIS and curbside pick-up, which is offered by several retailers, including Amazon and Walmart.

**FIGURE 4:**

**What's the main reason you're visiting your grocery retailer?**

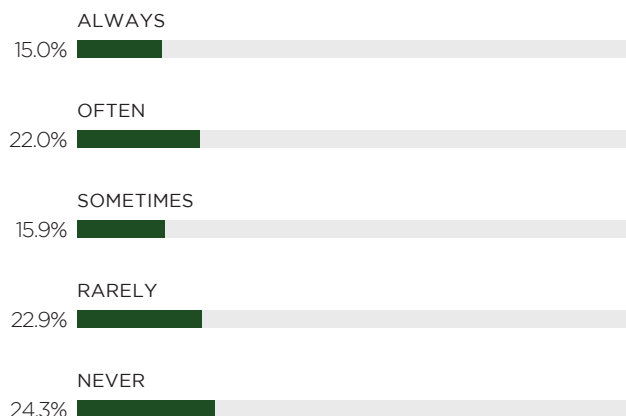
The top reasons customers choose a grocery retailer for shopping and making purchases



**FIGURE 5:**

**How often do customers pick up their groceries?**

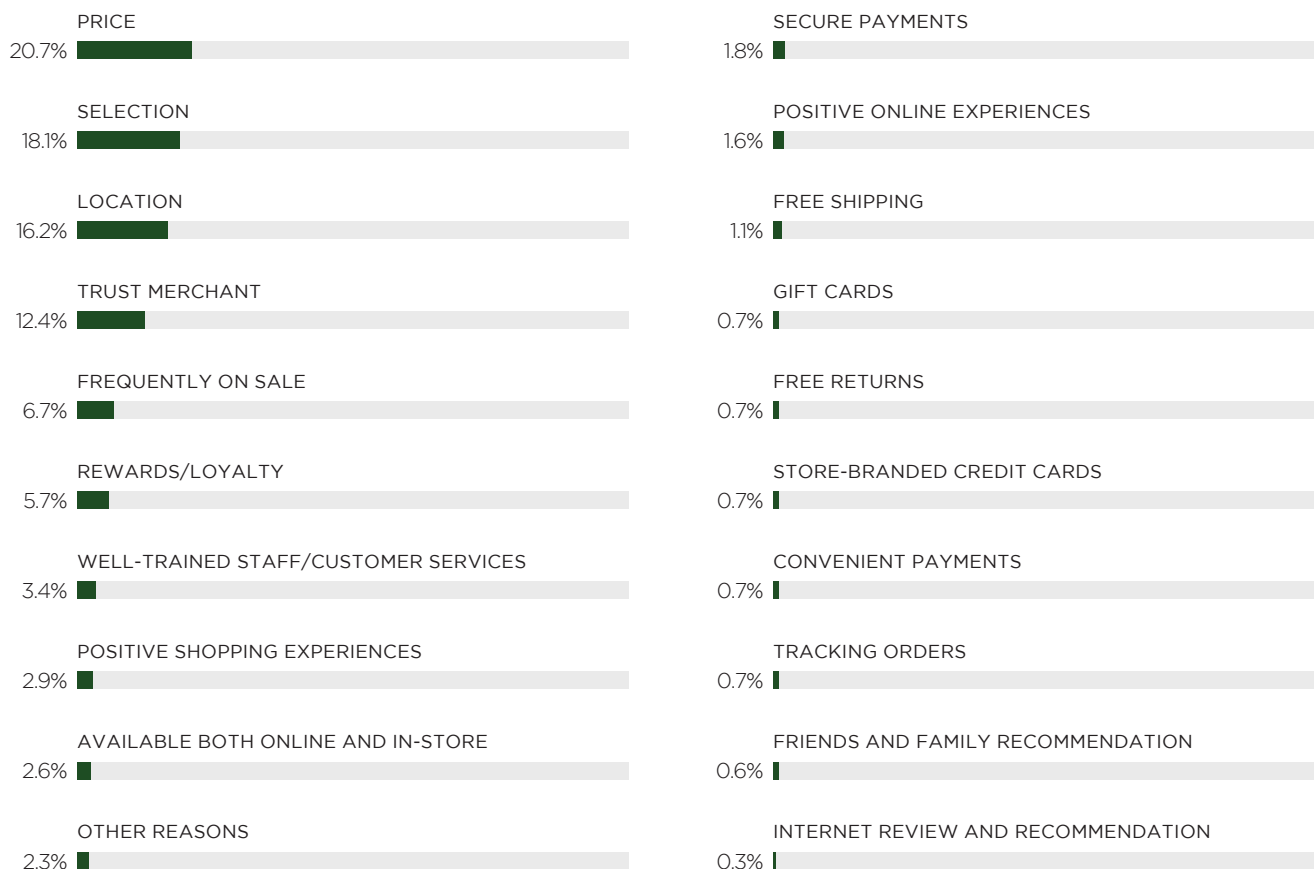
Portion of consumers who pick up groceries or-dered online, by frequency



This is especially imperative as most customers who shop online prefer their goods be delivered to their homes, rather than having to pick them up at a physical store. Twenty-four percent said they “never” pick food-at-home products up at a physical store if they’ve ordered online. Meanwhile, 15 percent said they “always” picked up their products instead of having them shipped.

**FIGURE 6:****Why is your grocery retailer your favorite?**

Top reasons influencing consumers' grocery retailer preferences



While offering a well-coordinated online and in-store experience is critical to customer loyalty, winning their business still hinges on the three Cs: lower cost, convenient locations and choice of products. Trusting a merchant is also key, cited by 12 percent of customers.

The top merchant is Walmart, according to our sample and as seen in Figure 1, which suggests consumers view the brand as both a trustworthy and a cost-effective option. Kroger and Albertson were second and third-most popular, chosen by 17 and 7 percent of consumers, respectively.

The three Cs aside, the factors influencing consumers' preference tend to vary by age. Those 34 and younger are more likely to care about in-store events, personal shoppers and targeted offers. Older consumers, 45 and up, are more interested in personalized offers and having the ability to scan and pay with their phones, as seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1:

**What is the main reason to visit and purchase from a specific retailer?**

Main reason customers shop and purchase from a grocery retailer, by age bracket

	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65+
Well-coordinated online and in-store	32%	23%	26%	25%	33%	27%
Feature personalized offers	13%	20%	25%	33%	32%	45%
Scan and pay through mobile devices	19%	16%	18%	21%	14%	11%
Provide targeted opportunities	9%	14%	9%	8%	8%	9%
Provide in-store entertainment	9%	7%	5%	4%	4%	0%
Personal shopper services	7%	8%	5%	4%	3%	1%
Kiosks to check online/purchase history	3%	4%	7%	3%	2%	1%
Provide virtual reality option	3%	4%	3%	2%	1%	5%
Chatbots/real-time support	5%	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%

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Factors influencing consumer preference vary by age.

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That said, approximately 1 percent of customers use Apple Pay, Google Pay or another digital wallet service at the point of sale (POS). Approximately 42 percent of consumers are paying for groceries with a debit card, 27 percent with a credit card and 16 percent with cash. Cash usage tends to decrease as consumers get older and earn higher incomes, according to PYMNTS' research.

As consumer income gets higher, the tendency to pay with cash appears to decrease. Most customers with higher income levels seem to pay with credit cards.





**FIGURE 7:**

**How consumers pay at a grocery retailer**

Payments used by consumers to pay for groceries, by method

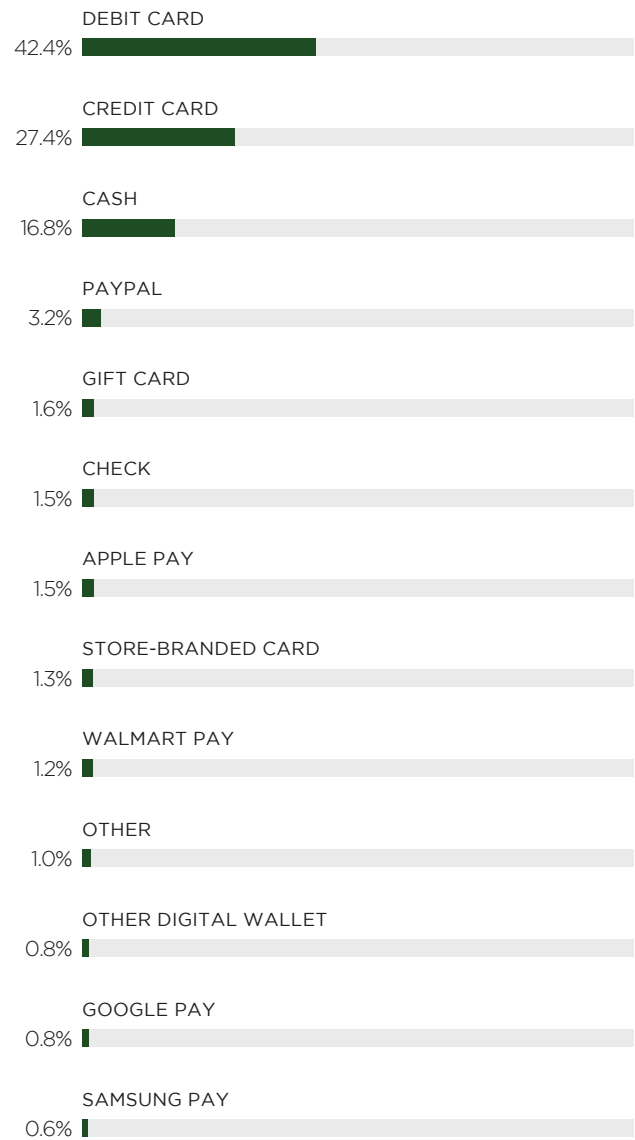
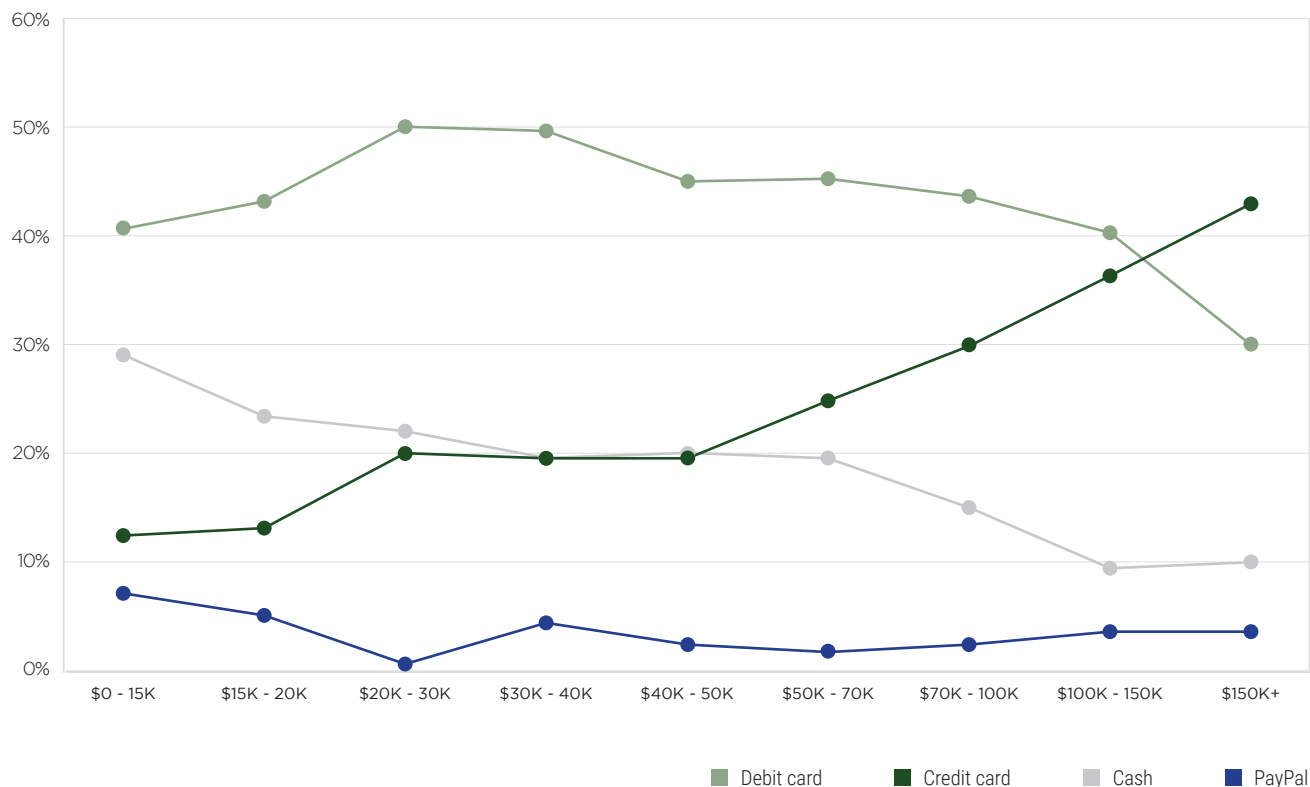


FIGURE 8:

**Do customers still pay with cash?**

How customers prefer to pay based on their incomes



“Higher-income consumers are more likely to pay with **credit cards.**”

Digital-only grocery shopping is still on the edge of the map, but as we said earlier, Walmart and other familiar grocery brands are seriously investing in it. For now, however, this means retailers are currently competing in familiar arenas. With a better understanding of where they are shopping and why, it's time to look at the group that has switched grocery retailers. Which factors influenced that decision?



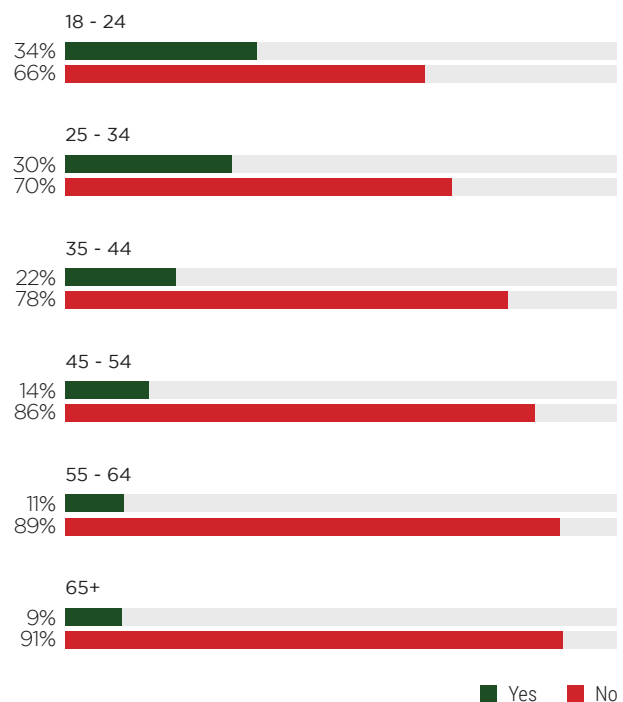
**C**ustomers are finicky, even when they're checking off items on a weekly grocery list. In the past three months, approximately 19 percent of those we surveyed had switched primary grocers. This means most are sticking with their usual stores, but it also means competing stores have an opportunity to change that.

As one might expect, younger consumers are much more likely to switch retailers than older ones. Thirty-four percent of the 18-to-24 bracket said they had changed retailers in the past three months, as did 30 percent of the 25-to-34 group. By contrast, just 14 percent of those aged 45 to 55 – the generation spending the most on retail products at approximately \$23,000 per year, compared to about \$11,000 for those under 25 – said they'd changed retailers during the same time frame.

For most, the decision to make the switch or stick comes down to the three Cs. Fifteen percent switched for better prices, 13 percent for a more convenient location and 9 percent

**FIGURE 9:**

**Have you recently changed your grocery retailer?**  
Percentage of consumers who have changed their grocery retailers, by age





for better product selection. Cost, convenience and choice are clearly the most important.

Consumers were also more likely to have different concerns based on age. Younger consumers were far more likely to change retailers based on product selection or online experiences, while older ones were more persuaded by prices, sales or loyalty programs. In addition, approximately 11 percent of millennials were more likely to switch retailers based on product selection, compared to about 4 percent of baby boomers. Online retailers may be better set up to meet these needs than physical stores.

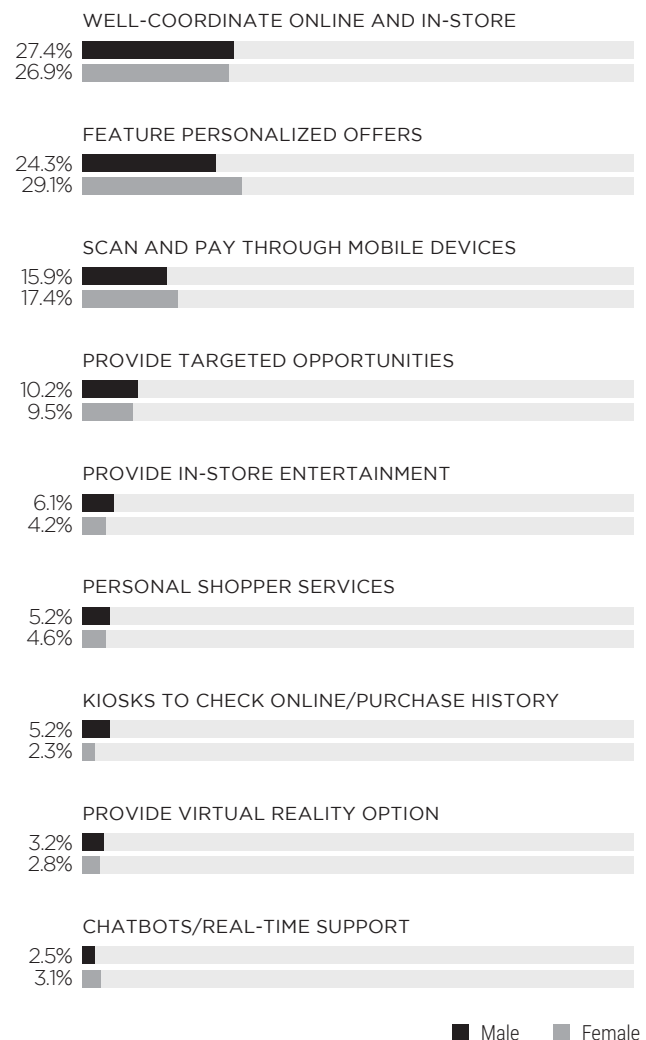
Online merchants may be more likely to draw male customers away from their current retailers, as men are more likely to care about internet recommendations and free shipping than women, according to our survey. Women are more likely to care about whether their retailers provide personalized offers, however, at 29 percent of those surveyed compared to 24 percent of males.

Willingness to change retailers depends highly on what customers value, which varies by income and gender. Women value sales on preferred products and prices more than men, for example. Interestingly, our survey found education to be one of the most influential factors.

**FIGURE 10:**

**What is the main reason you shop and purchase from your grocery retailer?**

Main reason consumers pick a grocery retailer to shop and purchase, by gender





## HOW DOES EDUCATION AFFECT WHERE AND HOW PEOPLE SHOP?

**C**ollege-educated consumers consider different factors compared to those with high school educations when shopping and purchasing groceries. Outside of convenience, cost and product selection, college-educated consumers are more likely to shop and purchase groceries online. The difference is slim, though, at approximately 5 percent compared to 4 percent of those with a high school education.

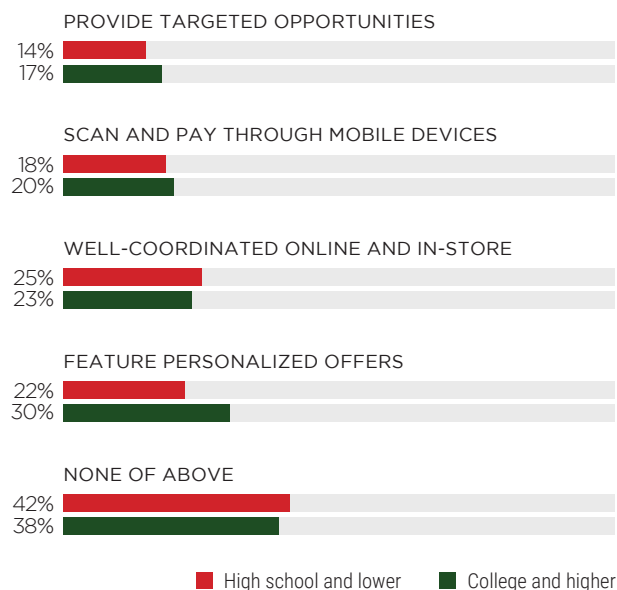
College-educated customers were also more likely to value retailers' online experiences and physical store locations. Personalized offers were more important to this group, too, with 30 percent choosing them as the most important factor at play compared to 22 percent of the high school-educated.

Consumers with high school educations value coordinated online and in-store experiences, and prefer to pay with debit cards or cash. College-educated customers are more likely to reach for credit cards.

**FIGURE 11:**

### Top reasons to select a grocery provider

Main reason customers chose a grocery retailer, by education level



For retailers, the differences between these groups can explain why some consumers choose one merchant over another. College-educated consumers are more likely to switch merchants for price, for example, while those with high school educations are more likely to do so for location or selection. Approximately 16 percent of college-educated consumers chose price as the main reason they switched retailers, compared to about 15 percent of high school-educated consumers.

As seen in Table 2, college-educated consumers value services like order tracking, recommendations and shopping both online and in physical stores more than those with high school educations. Once again, both groups view cost, convenience and choice of products as the main reasons to choose or switch their grocery merchant. This is true across gender, income, education and generations.

As explored earlier, however, consumers in different age groups have varying expectations of their grocery merchants. To show this, we examined a specific customer set — one with greater buying power and that might be a key customer demographic to watch as online shopping becomes more established. PYMNTS refers to these younger, highly influential consumers as “Bridge Millennials.”

**TABLE 2:****Main reason customers switch grocery retailers**

Heat map of the reasons customers switch retailers, by education

	High school and lower	College and higher
Prices	14.9%	16.4%
Locations	14.2%	11.7%
Selections	9.3%	8.4%
Other reasons	9.0%	7.5%
Frequently on sale	7.1%	7.5%
Positive online experiences	3.7%	7.0%
Positive shopping experiences	4.5%	5.1%
Gift cards	5.2%	4.2%
Friends/family recommendation	3.7%	4.7%
Available both online/in-store	3.7%	4.7%
Internet review/recommendation	2.6%	5.6%
Staff/customer services	4.5%	1.9%
Convenient payments	2.2%	4.7%
Free shipping	3.4%	2.3%
Secure payments	2.6%	2.3%
Rewards/loyalty	3.7%	0.9%
Tracking orders	1.9%	2.8%
Better than older merchant	2.2%	1.9%
Free returns	1.5%	0.5%





DEEP DIVE:

## HOW ARE BRIDGE MILLENNIALS GROCERY SHOPPING, AND WHY DO RETAILERS CARE?

**B**ridge Millennial consumers are between 30 and 40 years old. Outside of grocery, they make about 18 shopping trips per year and spend an average of more than \$2,000 annually, closer to Generation X's spending than that of the average millennial.

The group has an affinity for technology, with 17 percent using smartphones to shop for retail products. It has a large amount of buying power, too, making it a key demographic retailers should consider when looking to create customer loyalty. Additionally, 48 percent of Bridge Millennials prefer to shop online.

FIGURE 12:

### Average amount consumers spend per grocery visit

The amount Bridge and Non-Bridge Millennials spend on an average grocery trip

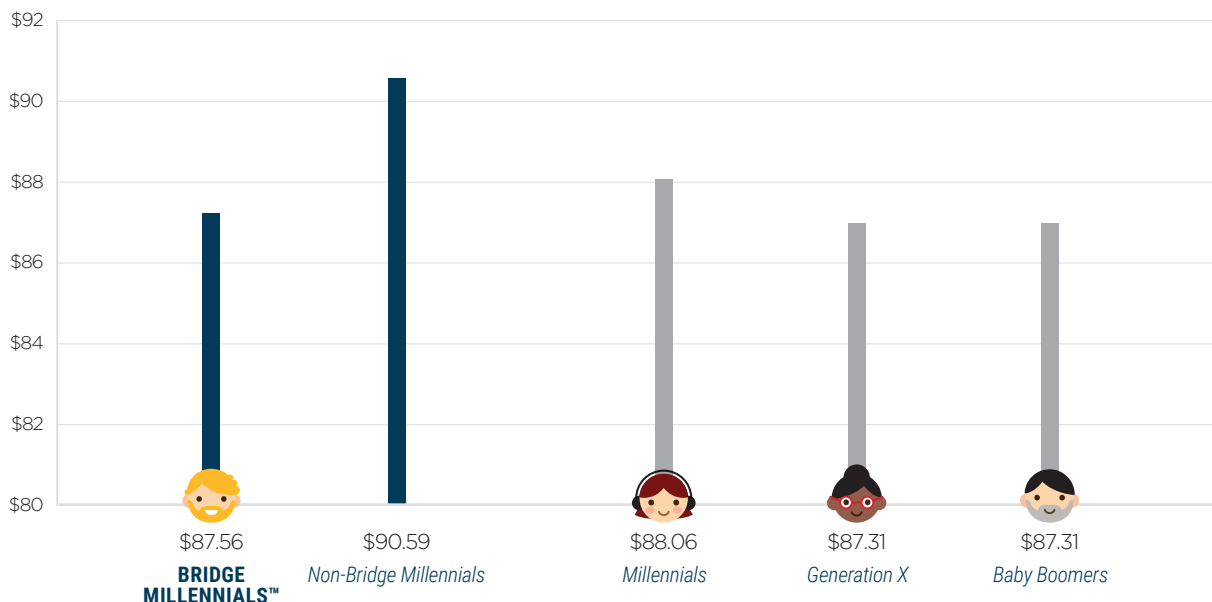
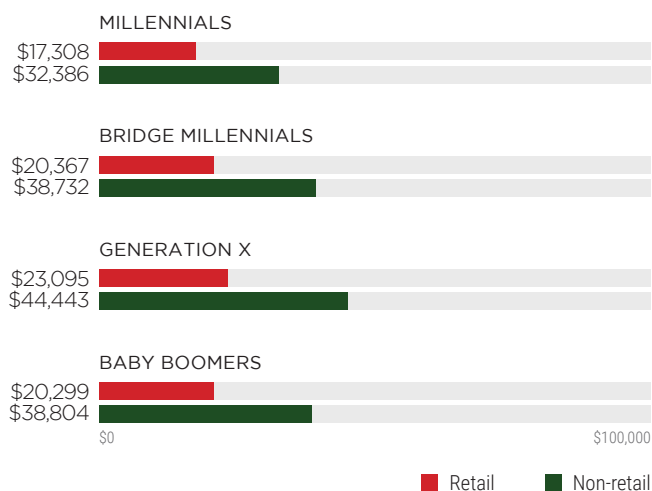


FIGURE 13:

**Total Amount Consumers Are Spending On Retail And Grocery**

Total consumer spending, categorized by generation



Why should retailers care about this generation's buying habits? At first glance, it doesn't seem that Bridge Millennials are the big spenders. In fact, when it comes to their weekly grocery shopping, this group spends less than others, averaging about \$87 per trip compared to the others' \$90 spend.

The Bridge Millennial generation also overlaps two other distinct age groups and, as one might expect, their spending power rises with age. Those aged 25 to 34 devote less than 20 percent of their total retail consumer spending to grocery. This can be expected as their careers are just beginning. As we move along the age range, however, spending increases for those with more experience and income.

Bridge Millennials make approximately 46 grocery visits per year, which is higher than the average. Additionally, though most shop at physical stores,

“**Bridge Millennials** show an affinity for technology and online shopping.”

technology is a key factor when Bridge Millennials choose to shop and purchase their groceries from a merchant, according to our survey. They value kiosks, chatbots, virtual reality and other digital experiences more than other generations.

Overall, Bridge Millennials seem to provide a snapshot of current customer behavior, with many of their values and choices reflecting the way consumers are generally shopping today. Like most groups, this one is much more likely to shop in stores, and cost, convenience and choices are still the top reasons they shop with or switch merchants. Walmart, Kroger and Albertson's are Bridge Millennials' top choices, with Amazon chosen by approximately 4 percent. They pay with cards, but use less debit and more credit than their counterparts.

Bridge Millennials' affinity for technology and online shopping make them key for merchants,

however, as the demographic appears to be more adaptable when shopping online or with smartphones. Bridge Millennials are slightly more likely to use a computer for their grocery shopping, too, as 8 percent purchased groceries with a computer compared to 5 percent of generation X (age 38 to 54) and 7 percent of non-Bridge Millennials.

This is important for retailers, showing that online shopping is not an avenue only explored by younger millennials or generation Z. Bridge Millennials are also most likely to use a voice





assistant when grocery shopping, although less than 1 percent of all consumers used the option here.

That Bridge Millennials view these technologies as valuable shopping elements proves online experiences are becoming just as important as flawless in-store versions. It's also worth noting that this generation is one of the most likely to switch retailers, beat only by younger millennials. Twenty-seven percent have switched grocery retailers, compared to 10 percent of baby boomers and 16 percent of those in generation X.

**TABLE 3:**

**In-store feature that grocery shoppers value most**

Heat map of the experiences most valued by customers, by generation

	 Millennials	 Bridge Millennials	 Generation X	 Baby Boomers
Feature personalized offers	26.3%	27.9%	27.2%	22.9%
Well-coordinated online and in-store	28.6%	29.0%	24.2%	17.9%
Scan and pay through mobile devices	25.6%	24.4%	21.5%	10.1%
Provide targeted opportunities	19.7%	18.3%	13.9%	11.5%
Kiosks to check online/purchase history	11.7%	13.0%	10.6%	3.9%
Provide in-store entertainment	14.2%	12.0%	7.3%	3.5%
Personal shopper services	13.9%	12.0%	7.4%	4.1%
Provide virtual reality option	11.2%	9.9%	5.9%	3.4%
Chatbots/real-time support	11.3%	11.1%	5.3%	1.7%
None of above	29.4%	30.3%	36.8%	55.4%



Bridge Millennials also place more emphasis on online experiences. Seamless digital shopping influences where this generation shops for groceries and, of the three factors considered in this report – cost, convenience and product selection – it was more likely to switch retailers because of product selection and less likely to do so for better prices.

Collectively, these preferences suggest that Bridge Millennials may be more receptive to online grocery shopping as retailers like Amazon expand their reach. They shop online, use their mobile phones and gravitate toward online elements of in-store merchants, like service kiosks, more often. They've also moved their shopping in categories like clothing and accessories to online channels, though, incidentally, they prefer to buy such items on Amazon.<sup>4</sup>

While it's unclear if Bridge Millennials will move their grocery shopping online, it is clear that grocery merchants must carefully consider the experiences they're presenting to this generation. This is only going to be more important as eTailers like Amazon gain ground over the next few years, especially as younger millennials become established and gain more spending power. In an industry in which loyalty is key, retailers are going to need to carefully consider which in-store and online experiences are most likely to keep those customers coming back.



“ **27 percent**  
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<sup>4</sup> Webster, Karen. Bridge Millennials and the threat to physical retail. PYMNTS. 2018. <https://www.pymnts.com/consumer-insights/2018/bridge-millennials-physical-retail-future-online-clothes-shopping>. Accessed October 2018.



## CONCLUSION

**T**he grocery wars are continuing on familiar battlefields. Cost, convenience and choice remain the top three elements about which consumers care most, and physical stores are still their favorite way to do their grocery shopping. Decades-old retailers like Walmart remain top choices for a large portion of them, retaining their loyalty across ages, educational backgrounds and income.

Even as customers flock to physical stores for weekly grocery runs, there are already signs that online experiences are growing in importance — especially for consumers with higher purchasing power. Some generations, like Bridge Millennials, are predisposed to online shopping and are now trying chatbots, voice assistants and other online services while they grocery shop.

Following that, programs using both in-store and online elements, like curbside pickup or personalized offers, are gaining more attention with newer, online entrants to the grocery ecosystem. Amazon's use of omnichannel features to lure its millions of digital consumers to its grocery services — through Prime Now promotions, for example — means consumers are at least thinking about, if not utilizing, ways to make their weekly grocery hauls easier with the online tools that permeate the rest of their lives.

As such, introducing another layer of competition in an industry constantly fighting for consumer loyalty is becoming standard. The retailer who wins will offer online tools that seamlessly complement in-store options, while still delivering better prices, better locations and more choices to their customers.

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